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Legislation to streamline firefighting efforts and strengthen fire safety passes Senate

LANSING—The Senate this week passed legislation to promote optimal firefighting efficiency, increase safety for Michigan citizens and consolidate firefighting resources, said Sen. Patty Birkholz.

The bills establish the Bureau of Fire Services as an autonomous agency within the Department of Labor and Economic Growth and transfer the powers and duties of the state fire marshal to the newly created office. The office will include the state fire marshal, Michigan Fire Fighters Training Council, Fire Safety Board and any other agency, board or commission designated as a part of the bureau.

“Today we have pledged to protect Michigan’s residents through increased firefighting services and homeland security efforts,” said Birkholz, R-Saugatuck Township. “Consolidating emergency fire services will help provide our firefighters with more training and funding to ensure they are prepared in case of a state crisis.”

The 25-bill package combines and places into the Bureau of Fire Services all aspects of fire protection that have been fragmented and scattered over the years to various areas of the government. The bureau will oversee all matters relating to fire services within the state, coordinate with the State Police on fire investigations and provide assistance to local law enforcement and fire agencies. The bills also empower first responders to fires and ensure appropriate funding.

The legislation follows an executive directive issued last November because the fire marshal’s supervisor blocked money from being used for firefighting training and other services. The proposals will place these changes into state law.

The package consists of Senate Bills 1133-1145 and House Bills 5860-5871. The bills:

- Establish the Bureau of Fire Services within DLEG;
- Transfer the duties of the state fire marshal to the new bureau;
- Require the state fire marshal, with the approval of the Michigan Fire Fighters Training Council, to prepare any examinations and standards related to firefighter training;
- Transfer the State Fire Safety Board and Michigan Fire Fighters Training Council to the Bureau of Fire Services;
- Make the state fire marshal a member of the Michigan Fire Fighters Training Council;
- Recognize the act creating the Arson Strike Force Unit; and
- Require that local units of government apply to the Bureau of Fire Services for permits to process fireworks.

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